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TAGS: PREL PTER PGOV CE

SUBJECT: ADMIRAL KEATING'S MEETING WITH MALDIVIAN PRESIDENT GAYOOM

Classified By: Ambassador Robert O. Blake, Jr.
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: In a friendly courtesy call with Maldivian President Gayoom on November 21, Pacific Commander Admiral Timothy Keating told the President his visit had reinforced the partnership between the U.S. and Maldives. He outlined for Gayoom plans the two militaries have to share more information on potential threats and to strengthen counter-terrorism cooperation. Gayoom expressed his appreciation for the tsunami and other cooperation of the U.S. military, and the assistance of the FBI in investigating the September 29 bomb incident in Male, noting the need for further information on the potential assistance the Maldivian suspects might have received from "foreign links." End Summary.

¶2. (C) Admiral Keating opened by thanking the President for the hospitality and good meetings that he and his team had enjoyed during their visit to the Maldives. He said the visit had reinforced the partnership and friendship between the U.S. and Maldives. Gayoom, who delayed his departure for the Commonwealth Summit to meet the Admiral, responded that he was happy to see relations growing with the U.S., including on the military side. He expressed his appreciation for the U.S. military's assistance after the tsunami in 2004 that augmented the longer term reconstruction

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assistance provided by the United States to help rebuild Maldives, ports and water systems.

¶3. (C) Admiral Keating noted that the U.S. and Maldives have an interest in information sharing. Maldives sits astride important sea lanes and suffered recently the sting of terrorism. He said he and Major General Zahid had agreed to share information of mutual interest about potential threats to the Maldives, emphasizing that Maldivian information about potentially hostile vessels or terrorists in its waters or territory was of great interest to the U.S. Gayoom responded

that the terrorist incident of September 29 in Male had been "out of the ordinary and alarming" for Maldives. He expressed his appreciation for the assistance provided by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and noted the need for further information on the potential assistance the Maldivian suspects might have received from "foreign links."

¶4. (C) Admiral Keating told Gayoom that PACOM also wants to strengthen counter-terrorism cooperation with the Maldivian defense forces. One small PACOM assessment team already had visited Maldives and PACOM was now in the process of organizing a larger team at Maldivian request. Such cooperation would help improve security and stability in the Indian Ocean.

¶5. (C) Admiral Keating briefed the President that he would be going to Iraq to share a Thanksgiving meal with service men and women from the Pacific theater and meet with military representatives from Tonga and Mongolia who were serving as part of the coalition in Iraq. He would then travel to Bangladesh to offer relief assistance following the cyclone. Gayoom commented that "we all face the dangers of climate change," from cyclones and other effects. He added that the recent report of the Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change had predicted even worse impacts from climate change than expected.

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